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IN VISION

DOCTOR WHO

THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS

Front cover: Phil Bevan

Bland stand

TERRANCE DICKS tells IN•VISION how he came to write himself out of THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS

BOB Holmes asked me to write a **Doctor Who** story again, and I agreed. We'd been talking about various myths, and one of them was the Frankenstein myth of a man making a monster. I came up with the idea of a galactic super-criminal who has a super robot assistant — a sort of devoted robot Jeeves. The criminal, Morbius, is fleeing from his enemies, and his spaceship crashes.

Morbius is smashed up to the extent that the robot can only save the head. And having been saved like this, he demands a new body. The robot is well-intentioned, but limited as robots are. Now for some reason, spaceships do crash on this planet. So the robot goes out, scoops up the remaining bits of alien life forms, and whacks them together into a roughly-functioning body, onto which he puts Morbius' head. But as Morbius has always been something of a handsome Greek god, he is far from pleased.

That was the story — it is gruesome, macabre, and funny. But it is also logical: the robot would do that. Bob and I worked out the story, and I wrote a set of scripts which he seemed happy with.

The mistake I made was in delivering them on the day I went away on holiday! During subsequent discussions, I was out of the country and could not be contacted. And Philip Hinchcliffe turned against the robot. I can sympathise with him more now that I'm a producer than I could then. He thought that the robot would be too expensive to realise. So Bob was instructed to remove the robot from the story.

Now, the robot is the whole *core* of the story. Poor old Bob, in a state of some desperation, came up with a mad scientist instead. It was not the most original idea in the world, but it was the only one available. He invented Solon, a nice character well-played by Philip Madoc (who does you a nice mad scientist).

Of course Bob was a very good writer, always my favourite writer on **Who**, and it

Photo courtesy of Christopher Barry

worked out all right. I'm not saying that it is not a good show, but it just wasn't *my* show by the time I came back from holiday.

A lot of the Sisterhood material was still there, and some of the Doctor's. But there was not a lot else: when you had removed the robot, you had to remove the robot scenes which ran right through it. So what remains is the basic concept of creating a body. It wasn't as simple as just replacing the robot with Solon. They would not have the same motivation, so every scene in which the robot appeared would have had to be rewritten.

Technically, a production team is not allowed to do that to a script without consulting the writer. I could have said that they were not to do it. But Bob was an old friend, and I did not want actually to block the show and put them in terrible trouble.

However, I was furious when I got the scripts. I rang up Bob and shouted at him down the telephone. He was apologetic, but asked what else he could have done. Eventually I said: "All right. You can do it, but I'm going to take my name off it. (This was the ultimate sanction!) Not because it's a bad show, but because it's now much more you than me."

He asked: "Well, what name do you want to put on it?" I said: "I don't care. You can put it out under some bland pseudonym," and slammed the phone down.

I sulked through the rest of the production, having withdrawn in high dudgeon to have nothing to do with it and let them get on with it.

Weeks later, when I saw the *Radio Times*, I noticed it was 'THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS by Robin Bland'—that's Robin Bland's only existence in life. By then I'd cooled down, and the joke disarmed me completely.

I quite like MORBIUS now, except that there's a central nonsense at the heart of it: if Solon is the greatest surgeon in the galaxy, he would surely have more sense than to put together this hotch-potch of a body. The central concept doesn't work any more; it only works with a robot, to whom one organic being is much like another.

I HAVE written big chunks of Robert Holmes myself, though. There's a lot of me that's gone out under Bob's name. It's the kind of thing you expect as a **Doctor Who** script writer.

I remember when Bob took over from me. He'd been in the writing business a long time. And he was saying: "Well, I don't think it should be too difficult. I'll get it all sorted out, get a few good reliable chaps in to write the scripts, and then I'll pop into the office once or twice a week to see it's running smoothly. Then I can get on with my writing."

I came in about three weeks later, and there he was surrounded by scripts and tearing his hair, saying "It's all rubbish! I don't know what I'm going to do." And I said: "I told you it wasn't going to be that easy."

I think he found it quite hard because **Doctor Who** is a very difficult show to write, to script edit, to get right, and to get out. It is loaded with problems.

I also think he had more problems with his producers than I ever had. Philip Hinchcliffe was prone to change his mind at a late stage in the story. He would make a decision which would leave Bob with an enormous amount of work, and irate writers, on his hands! I think he was scrabbling for survival—the way one always is on **Doctor Who**.

The whole thing didn't put me off writing for **Doctor Who** again. Though if they'd made a habit of it... □

TERRANCE Dicks' involvement in THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS really began when Philip Hinchcliffe discovered that there had been no attempt at a serious robot story in **Doctor Who**. What attempts there had been generally revolved around what he terms "the Cowboys and Indians approach — of men in red hats shooting at men in blue hats." In other words, the robots were there to shoot and be shot at, with little investigation of the narrative possibilities offered by encounters between human and machine intelligence.

Hinchcliffe gave this thought to script editor Robert Holmes, who himself approached Terrance Dicks. Holmes was unsure how to frame this conflict of cultures, but appreciated that Dicks had done a capable job in parodying *King Kong* in Tom Baker's debut story ROBOT. Parts of ROBOT borrowed ideas from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Perhaps this idea could be revisited, but foregrounding the monstrous elements. And Holmes had worked for Dicks on several Pertwee **Who** stories as a writer — as well as trailing Dicks for stories in season 11 before taking on his role as script editor.

One of the Clawrantulars from Terrance Dicks' 1974 stage play *Seven Keys to Doomsday*

Taking the robot and Frankenstein ideas as his brief, Dicks scripted a studio-bound four-parter very close in structure to what was eventually recorded as THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS. The name of the planet, Karn, he lifted from his own 1974 stage play *Doctor Who and the Seven Keys to Doomsday*, along with the concepts of a brain in a tank, a mind battle, a claw-limbed behemoth, and the setting of a citadel perched on a storm-swept hillside. Adopting the Holmes text of borrowing from the classics, Dicks lifted from Rider Haggard's *She* the concept of a society protected against ageing by a life-preserving flame.

The big difference was the line-up of the Doctor's main protagonists in the story. Terrance Dicks' script had Morbius' head being saved from destruction by an ultra-sophisticated robot, designed and programmed by Morbius.

The problem, however, was the monster's lack of understanding of the very essence of what makes a man a man. With no regard for aesthetics, the machine has botched together a pot-pourri body that, according to its reasoning, will house the brain. It does not know why its reanimation experiments to date have failed. Unwittingly, the Doctor provides some of the answers, but by doing so places himself in peril as the robot then tries to use his body instead. Only when that too fails, and the Sisterhood closes in on the renegade Time Lord, does the mind of Morbius order the robot to rehouse his brain within its artificial body — leading to the Hammer Films climax of the firebrand-wielding locals confronting the hideous but massively-powerful monster.

And the famous 'early incarnations' sequence? Asked about their identities some years later, Terrance Dicks said: "I have no idea who the faces in the Mind Battle were. You would have to ask Bob." Robert Holmes and Philip Hinchcliffe's views appear in 'Production' this issue. □

Can the Doctor survive his mind battle with Morbius? Maren prepares the make the final sacrifice — her own immortality

PRODUCT

THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS started life as a story about robots. Philip Hinchcliffe's interest in Isaac Asimov's science fiction took in the groundbreaking 'Robot' novels, and he was interested in the man/machine differentiation in the books. The way that the script changed from the initial commission to final transmission is discussed by Terrance Dicks in 'Bland stand' elsewhere in this issue of IN•VISION.

Recording

Television Centre in London was the sole venue for this story. Even THE ARK IN SPACE (serial 4C) had featured some Ealing film sequences for modelwork, but with the exception of stock footage of rain, this was the first all-video, all live-action **Doctor Who** production shot indoors since THE SENSORITES (serial G).

Priority bookings of TC1 for Christmas shows delayed recording of THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS until Monday 6th October 1975, some six weeks since the last episode of THE ANDROID INVASION (serial 4J) was completed. The 'exterior' scenes for all four episodes were recorded in this block. However, an additional scene of one and a half minutes, featuring Solon, the Morbius monster, and the voice of Morbius, had to be restaged on 24th October.

Appropriately for this difficult all-studio serial, Philip Hinchliffe engaged Christopher Barry as director and Barry Newbery as designer — two **Doctor Who** veterans to overcome the not inconsiderable problems posed by the serial. Mainly they had to accomplish the important illusion of making lengthy outdoor scenes credible when recorded in studio.

For the planet Karn exteriors (in block 1), the team was eventually able to book TV Centre's largest studio, TC1. ('RX' has been held over this issue for reasons of space, and will be published at a later date.) Some of the set's rockfaces came from stock, but most of the surfaces were specially, and expensively, built from scratch, including the raised mountain-path rigs over which the Morbius monster would topple in episode four.

Modelwork

To avoid filming model shots, the two model sets were built as part of the studio layout — these being the spaceship graveyard, where ships were drawn to their doom by a suspicious Sisterhood, and Solon's citadel. The latter was placed on one of the rock wall sets, with a false-perspective foreground, and recorded separately. The ships' graveyard was recorded by one camera and ChromaKeyed into the view of the Doctor and Sarah looking out towards the curved, backlit cyclorama which encircled all the 'exterior' sets. The resulting composite, with added spark machine lightning effects, was the one effect that Barry Newbery thought failed to work in a story of which he otherwise felt very proud. At the time he said: "There wasn't any trouble with BRAIN OF MORBIUS, but the spaceship graveyard didn't come off too well."

Director Christopher Barry says he was happy with the models, however: "For the landscape model of crashed spaceships, I'm not sure that they actually made many bits for them. I think John Horton went round the workshops seeing what they had from old programmes that could be painted a different colour and shoved in. But there were loads of models scattered around, and it made a nice shot — illuminated, and backlit with this flash of lightning."

Casting

Christopher Barry cast Michael Spice as the Voice of Morbius because of previous radio work: he had also interviewed him for an earlier job, and decided he would like to find a part for the actor. Barry had worked with Philip Madoc (Solon) before, and was pleased by the choice:

"He was superb. One knew he would give a lovely performance because he is a very good actor: I have never seen him bad. I wanted it played for real and not sent up. Philip has a strength about him. His voice has that strong, cutting Welsh edge, his eyes light up, and he has a slightly manic smile of satisfaction."

Colin Fay (Condo) was an opera singer who sang small roles and chorus work, and who had not done a lot of straight acting. Barry: "He was a huge man, and like so many big men was incredibly gentle. Yet he played this backward creature who could be fearsome but vulnerable. We felt terribly sorry for him when he finds the monster has his arm.

"I cast Cynthia Grenville as Maren for her gravelly voice and wonderful lined face — I also considerd Mary Morris (later to appear in KINDA, serial 5Y). I had seen Gilly Brown (Ohica) in another programme: she is very tall, and has a strong voice and a strongly attractive face. She also has expressive eyes, and make-up made the most of them.

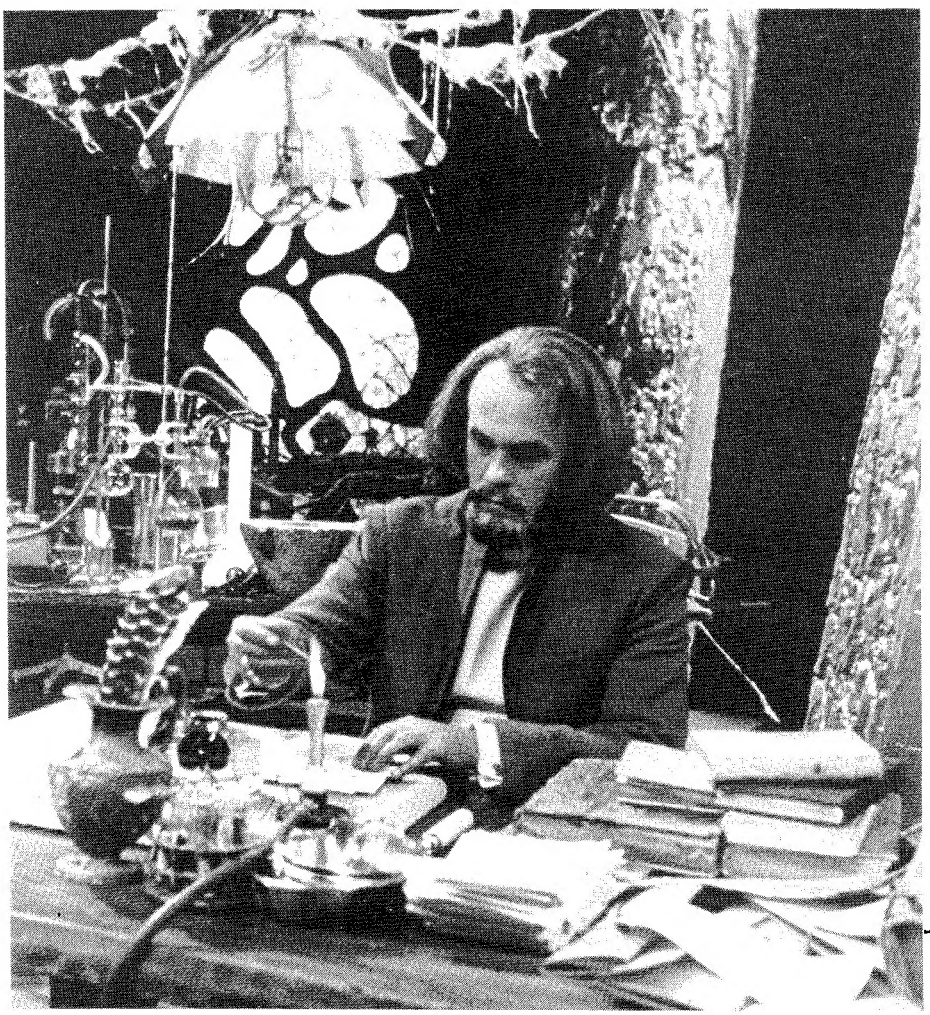
"For the other fire maidens, I got other young actresses who were pretty, vital, and lively. That was so that, when we did the immolation of Maren at the end and she goes through to become a young maiden again, we wanted the feeling that she had been a young maiden just like all the other girls. So I surrounded myself with pretty girls!"

As the monster, Barry cast Stuart Fell, who had worked for him before on stunt arrangements (see below).

Design

Newbery designed the inside of Solon's castle, based on the the style of the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi who designed Barcelona Cathedral, and whose freeform multi-tiered structures of tilted, internal columns had earlier influenced Hollywood's 'gothic' films of the Thirties and Forties. With no other specifications in the script from which to work apart from the notion of the disused Hydrogen plant, Newbery conceived the citadel as some form of disused temple, with the crypt beneath converted by Solon into his laboratory. To increase its apparent size, Newbery added several easily-moved columns for the cameras to track past and through.

Director Christopher Barry explains: "Solon's castle was a big set; I don't know why it came as large as it did. There was one shot which I took quite high up, getting in the whole of this vast set: it had a raised foreground section where Condo is looking in a trunk for his arm, and goes around to



Philip Madoc claimed that the role of Solon was so memorable that he could remember many of his lines years later

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join Solon down below. On top of that there was the laboratory, the cellar, and the steps down to the cellar.

"I wanted to keep the castle sets Gothic, but I did not want Gothic architecture. I asked Barry Newbery to look at the work of Gaudi. So he came up with these rather strange shapes for the corridors and the pillars. The fretwork of the balustrade gave it a sort of art deco look, but it also had a Gothic (with a capital K on the end) quality. And without being really Gothic, it gave it that horror feeling."

Maren's shrine was quite a small set, considering what was recorded in it — though Christopher Barry does not remember the studio being particularly crowded. "But we almost had an accident with Tom and the flames. It got too hot, and we had to stop and do a re-take."

The director found exterior set where the TARDIS first materialises very useful: "It is a sort of Fingal's Cave or Giants Causeway, with basalt pillars. I used that for the scenes where the maidens go through in a procession, carrying the bier with the Doctor in it. And when Sarah is blind, staggering around and almost falling over the cliff. (See also 'Video nasty' elsewhere this issue.

"But one was not made aware of the studio-bound serial. When we did use that exterior set for when the fire maidens march up the side of the hill and attack Morbius, or carrying the bier, or Sarah Jane comes down, that sort of set gives a distant feeling—and the lighting helped make it three-dimensional. It is not so much like a studio if you open it up, and it isn't just a box set."

Morbius monster

Another big expense was the Morbius monster. A heavy-duty cladding of textured latex and foam rubber over a cotton jumpsuit, the costume part (see design sketch) was designed by Rowland Warne. "We cut up lumps of foam and stuck them on, and then covered this with terylene wadding dipped in latex. We built muscles down the back and tufts of hair down the spine — which in fact were to conceal the zip (see notes on production sketch, back page this issue). I used real surgical clips on the body, and also coffee beans mixed into the latex to give the skin the right texture.

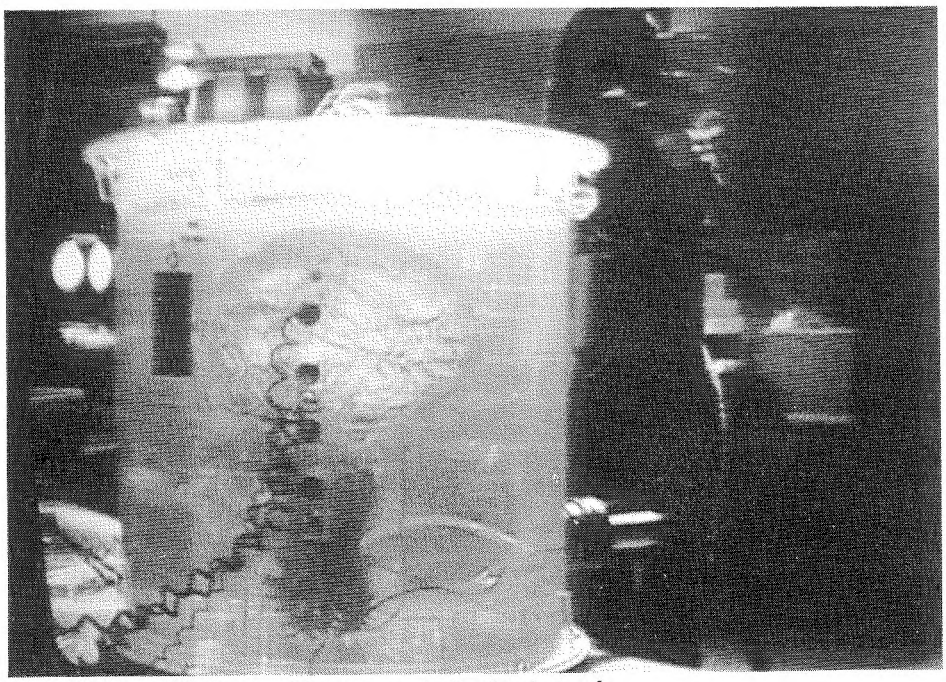
"We actually had two versions of the costume: one to fit the headpiece, and the other which had a solid neck stump with tubes coming out to allow the actor to breathe. I made the claw almost slightly over the top so that it was a concoction of elements that weren't really recognisable."

Visual Effects provided the brain case, which was originally designed without the two eye stalks. It was worn as a 'hat' by Stuart Fell, who played the monster for all its acted and stunt sequences. The metal collar beneath the globe rested on Fell's head, with a chinstrap holding it in place. The globe's eye stalks were a late addition when an opinion was expressed that the full monster looked as though it was wearing a 1950s goldfish space helmet.

Rowland Warne explained how the costume initially gave him problems: "It had to be headless, which meant that I had to build the shoulders up — I don't like rubber suits that have nothing in them, as they buckle, which has happened to some of my monsters in **Doctor Who**."

Extra Alan Crisp wore the headless suit during its episode one and two appearances. When Condo realises that his own arm forms part of the monster, the camera shot was not close enough to reveal the difference in size between the arms ▷

Morbius' body has been destroyed, but the Doctor is looming over his shoulder



The blinded Sarah stumbles towards the brain tank

The Morbius monster was a joint effort between costume and visual effects. Philip Madoc looks on admiringly at Stuart Fell's costume

PROD

◁ of the monster and the substantially-larger figure of Colin Fay!

Other costumes

The alien slaughtered by Condo at the start of episode one was one of James Acheson's Mutt costumes left over from THE MUTANTS (serial NNN). Rowland Warne: "We found the costume in stock, and the visual effects department did quite a few repairs on it for me." Dicks' original script named the creature only as Kriz, and its identity as a Mutt (from a story also directed by Christopher Barry) was only established in the rewrite when the costume had been exhumed as a budgetary measure.

Christopher Barry: "We re-used the Mutt costume, though I don't remember whose idea it was. It was probably done for comedy's sake, as well as being a reference that **Doctor Who** people could appreciate — an in-joke, if you like. And it was economical, too."

Another of the Mutt costumes was cannibalised so that the head could be used by Visual Effects for the 'ganglion experiment' prop table.

Visual effects for the Sisterhood sequences also proved problematic for costume. Rowland Warne explains: "I wasn't told before we got into the studio that the Sisterhood were going to carry genuine burning torches. So, I had to fireproof them on the day with a substance that could have caused skin irritation.

Rowland Warne's production sketch of the monster's body—spot the hidden zip

The Doctor challenges Morbius to a spot of mind-wrestling — with unpredictable results for the show's continuity

"They had hats which were made very cheaply and decorated with coloured latex. The skirt fabric was in two layers, and made ragged and sprayed with wood dyes to give it texture. They wore bodices which were fabric covered in latex, with plastic teaspoons from Winnie, the BBC tea lady, laid into it.

Christopher Barry: "We decided on flame colours for the firemaidens, and gave them strange toasting-forks of flames too — not entirely satisfactory, but they looked quite sharp. And the tea cosies they wore on their heads added to their stature — they were all quite tall anyway, and that made them look taller still.

"Solon could have come from anywhere, though he looked like a Gerry Anderson character in the costume he wore — distinguished, professorial. Condo looked like a pre-Revolutionary Russian peasant, which helped his image of a servile person at the bottom of the pack."

Rowland Warne explained about Condo: "I had to make the henchman (Condo) look lumbering and awkward, without appearing offensive to people who were disabled. It was a shape created with padding, which helped the actor maintain the right stance."

Stunts

Stuart Fell was cast as the monster by Christopher Barry: "He was happy to do the claw. It's a terrible thing in that horrible costume, with his eyes in the neck and that great goldfish bowl on top." Close camera angles hid the mattresses and stage hands waiting out of shot to catch Stuart Fell as he performed the stunt for the death of the monster. The cumbersome nature of the costume restricted the stunt man's movement and field of vision. As he tumbled backwards over the 'cliff', Fell was unable to stop himself catching the camera pedestal on landing, resulting in some camera shake which appeared in the transmitted programme. The final shot, as the creature plummets to its doom after being forced over a cliff by the Sisterhood, was achieved by combining a caption aerial photograph of a valley with a zoomed out view of the monster (Stuart Fell in a body-shaped harness, kicking his legs as he was turned round by handle against a blue backdrop), ChromaKeyed on.

As well as the Morbius monster, two other characters had doubles in this story. Jennie le Fre substituted for Elisabeth Sladen as the monster knocks Sarah down the steps to the laboratory in episode four. And also in episode four, Martine Holland (one of the sisters) doubled as Maren when Cynthia Grenville enters the flames and grows younger just before her death.

To make the sequences in the small shrine set easier to co-ordinate on the day, the dancers who were hired for the roles of some of the Sisterhood were rehearsed for movement. Christopher Barry: "One or two of the firemaidens were dancers — for example, Janie Kells came to me through Geraldine Stephenson, who choreographed the dance around the fire."

Visual effects

To simulate rain in the studio, a loop of 35mm stock film was obtained and inlaid over sequences calling for a heavy downpour — though the rain for Doctor and Sarah's arrival at Solon's front door was a practical effect.

Studio pyrotechnics were used for the TARDIS departure at the story's conclusion — accompanied by a speeded-up version of the dematerialisation sound. Christopher Barry: "That was a joke. We'd been playing it up, and it wasn't in the script — it was my idea."

The show also featured a number of specially constructed props: the brain itself in its tank of bubbling green gunge, Morbius' voice box, and the equipment for the mind-bending contest.

Christopher Barry: "The vocal chords that John Horton devised for Morbius was a vibrating piece of dough-like rubber, which worked awfully well with the lights flashing. I think it was voice-activated."

Other practical in-studio visual effects included the bubbling chemical mix that the Doctor concocts in a kidney dish to poison Solon in episode four, and the small charge in the monster's braincase as Morbius fails to destroy the Doctor in the mind-wrestling sequence of the same episode.

Solon's home was bizarrely decorated with a number of heads, including the model of Morbius before his execution which the Doctor seems to recognise.

Video effects

An additional special treatment was a shot sequence of 35mm animation, from the graphics department, for the scene of Maren's ring blazing fire, first at Condo and later at Sarah. This animation was combined with a still shot of actress Cynthia Grenville pointing the ring to camera. Christopher Barry was disappointed with the final result, and would have preferred the 'beam' to have been more directional.

Star filters on the camera lenses enhanced the apparent ferocity of the flames burning in the firebrands. Similarly, a star filter and fisheye lens achieved the views of the TARDIS and Solon's hall as seen through Maren's ring, ChromaKeyed into a close-up. For the teleportation scenes, a swirl pattern caption slide (its image blurred by feeding the picture through a soft-edge generator) was unmasked on cue and ChromaKeyed over a monitor-fed picture of the subject being teleported (the TARDIS and the Doctor). Rollback and mix was used for the actual vanishing, and the smoke effects disguised the superimposition.

To give a greater feeling of depth and claustrophobia to the corridors and rocky caverns, some scenes (for example, Solon and Condo entering the shrine, and the Doctor and Sarah hiding as they escape from it) had foreground set details ChromaKeyed over the live action.

In contrast, ChromaKey was also used to

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extend a shot of a downstairs corridor in Solon's basement beyond the limit of the set to give it depth.

Sound effects

Sound effects for the show included the familiar thunderclaps and rain sounds, as well as a crackling fire for the view from behind the fireplace of Solon greeting the Doctor and Sarah's arrival. Michael Spice's voice was also treated live in the studio. As Christopher Barry puts it: "**Doctor Who** sound supervisors like Tony Millier have their own repertory of noises to make voices."

Music

Dudley Simpson provided the incidental music for the show, and his work impressed the director; "Dudley had a lot of music to do in his career, but I think this is one of the better ones he did. I had worked with him before, so I left him to get on with it. I said to him that the material dictated the music, and I am sure he knew what I meant."

Editing

Part one was found to have overrun slightly once all the material was combined. Rather than prune the episode, Christopher Barry used as its cliffhanger the scene of Sarah discovering the headless monster, rather than the scripted original, and possibly stronger, ending of Solon swearing revenge against the Sisterhood and that "palsied hag Maren". Episode one still runs over 25 minutes, however.

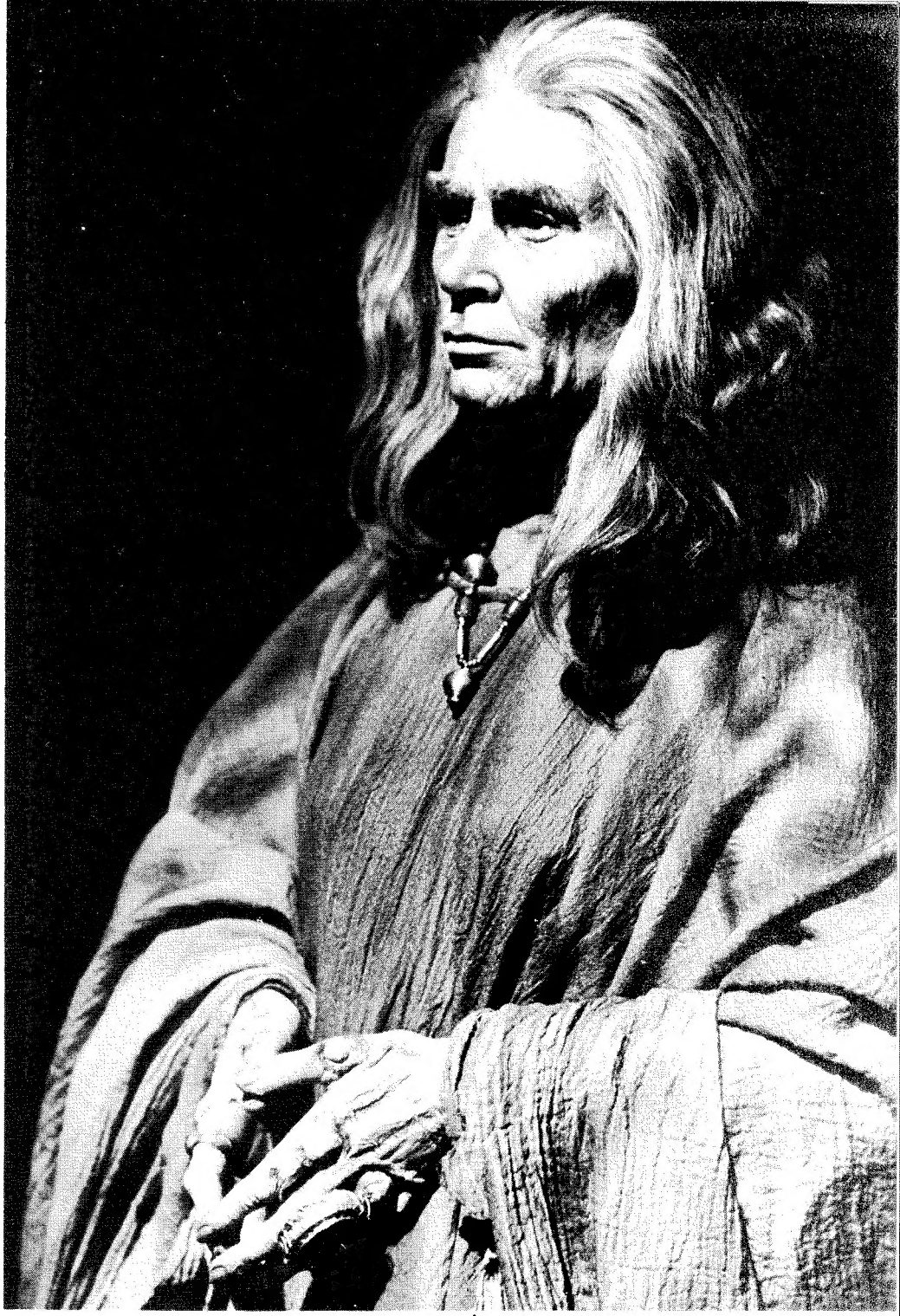
Reception

Aside from the infamous sequence of the brain slopping out onto the floor as Condo and Solon struggle, the main complaint against this story by the National Viewers and Listeners Association (NVALA) was Solon's shooting of Condo with a revolver, rather than a more fantastic device like a laser pistol. This effect was made more grisly by fitting Colin Fay with an explosive chestplate which blew electronically-detonated bullet holes and stage blood through his jerkin as Philip Madoc fired the gun.

Neither were the NVALA the only critics of the show. Equity, the actors' union, demanded (and got) a special payment from the BBC for the appearance of non-Equity performers in the episode four mind-bending battle.

Conceived as a bit of fun, the sequence featured photographs of eight **Who** production staff, dressed in stock costumes, as earlier incarnations of the Doctor. "We worked out what period we wanted for each image of the Doctor," recalled Rowland Warne. The Doctors were: producer Philip Hinchcliffe, script editor Robert Holmes, directors Christopher Barry and Douglas Camfield, production manager George Gallacio, writer Robert Banks Stewart, and production assistants Chris Baker and Graeme Harper. Those not involved in MORBIUS were in preproduction meetings for THE SEEDS OF DOOM (serial 4L — see IN•VISION issue 13). The photographs, along with publicity stills of Jon Pertwee, Patrick Troughton, William Hartnell, the Morbius monster, and an artwork representation of the bust of Morbius in Solon's laboratory, were mixed with a prerecorded colour loop from the title sequence. Tom Baker's face was taken live from a simultaneous camera shot of him.

Philip Hinchliffe said of the scene: "We tried to get famous actors for the faces of the Doctor. But because no-one would volunteer, we had to use 'backroom boys'. And it is true to say that I attempted to imply that William Hartnell was not the first Doctor."



Cynthia Grenville as Maren

Robert Holmes took the same view of the Doctor's existence. "He is mortal, and has only so many regenerations," he commented in later years. "We don't know which one Hartnell was, whether he was the first or not. In the phantasmagoric scene where they are mind-wrestling, we see the Doctor forced back through a number of regenerations."

If the Time Lords have only thirteen incarnations (another Holmes/Hinchcliffe reference, from THE DEADLY ASSASSIN, serial 4P), then we see twelve of them in THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS.

A two-week gap for Christmas programmes delayed transmission of the show until January 3rd, 1976. Afterwards, the slamming that the story received amounted to the strongest attack yet on **Doctor Who** by Mary Whitehouse of the NVALA. Australia refused to grant the serial an all age groups certificate, effectively banning it from ABC-TV until the mid-eighties, when it premiered in a heavily-edited version. In Britain too, both the omnibus length rerun in 1976 and the BBC Enterprises video release were pruned — much to director Christopher Barry's disgust (see interview). And to date, only certain regions of the USA and Canada have seen the full version of the story. Philip Hinchcliffe later observed: "I felt we were going as far as was permissable, as we did in ARK IN SPACE."

Nevertheless, the serial was appreciated widely by newspaper critics, especially Shaun Usher of the *Daily Mail*, who praised it highly a year later when comparing its version of the brain-in-a-tank plot to one featured in a new, glossy American series, *Fantastic Journey*.

Continuity

In this story, the Doctor's age is revealed as 749, the Sisterhood talk about "the nine corners of the Universe", the elixir from the Flame is said to be used by Time Lords for difficult regenerations, and the Doctor is "nobody" while Morbius is "a Time Lord of the first rank". □

A Time Lord spell

GARRY BRADBURY and ALISON BAUGET discuss the big issues that the WHO team saw in this monster production

IN a period of the programme that is recognised for its eclecticism, THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS stands out as one of the most notable products of what is now seen as Hinchcliffe/Holmes gothic horror. For horror is what we get, akin to a Universal Pictures *Frankenstein*. You can see what was in Robert Holmes' mind when he adapted Terrance Dicks' script to eliminate the robotics element. It was what he loved about the scripts he was working on then — the 'quotations' from films, with all the visuals that entailed.

Some elements of the classic novel remain: while Frankenstein's monster educates itself to read with books found in a trunk, the Morbius monster is humanised with the power of reasoning and speech (after an early rampage) by Solon's operation, in which he is helped by Sarah. And while Frankenstein's monster meets up with a blind man who cannot see its monstrousness, Sarah does see the monstrous body — but later cannot see the even more revolting disembodied brain, and thinks that Morbius is a real person.

But Mary Shelley's Romantic original is largely left behind. From the opening storm to the hunting of the monster by torch-wielding locals, the images are familiar. Following the technology of THE ANDROID INVASION, it was an understandable choice. Solon's citadel recalls the storm-lashed castle of Frankenstein films old and new, while Sarah's blindness recalls the little girl in the films who cannot see the monster's is dangerous — because of her innocent acceptance of its puzzled gentleness. The girl is killed by the monster's misunderstanding, when it sees she is strewing flowers in the river to float—and doesn't understand why the girl does not float when it places her in the water too. Sarah is nearly a victim of the monster's instinctive will to survive, to flee fire, and to revenge (though it cannot understand why) Morbius' treatment at the hands of the Sisterhood.

The borrowing doesn't end there. The elixir of life is a familiar ingredient of Rider Haggard's *She*. And the eponymous brain is a descendant of the genre later so amusingly parodied in the Steve Martin vehicle *The Man with Two Brains*, a genre in which unappealing grey matter exerts influence over scientific attention — watch any of the three adaptations of Curt Siodmak's *Donovan's Brain*, or (if you can stand it) *They Saved Hitler's Brain* (*Madmen of Mandoras*).

MORBIUS is a Grand Guignol drama, full of possible cliffhangers. The torch applied to the execution pyre, the Doctor's 'funeral' procession, Sarah's realisation of her blindness are all memorable. Perhaps inevitably, the serial also absorbed the format's worst aspects: Sarah's blind floundering

> "That squalid brood of harpies, the Sisterhood. They've rescued him with one of their wretched telekinetic tricks. That accursed hag Maren found I was holding a Time Lord and rescued him. May her stinking bones rot. I'll see her die, Condo. I'll see that palsied harridan scream for death before Morbius and I have finished with her!"

whilst threatened by the monster is a little embarrassing, and commented on at the time by the two regulars. If the direction has a general fault, it is a television problem of being fundamentally static.

But the carefully constructed sequence of scenes is characteristic of Barry's direction. Despite the complaints provoked by the programme, it is fair comment to claim the depiction of violence is 'comic strip' — the story demanded such an approach.

The director was helped by the service of good actors. Tom Baker is on fine form: recovering from Solon's rather stiff drink, the Doctor can refuse the Sisters hospitality with "I had a little drink about an hour ago", delivered with the cheeky knowingness of a confident fourth Doctor. And Lis Sladen performs well when the script eventually allows her to get up and do something more than mope or scream. Philip Madoc is striking as Mehendri Solon, relishing the role of a man driven by twin spurs of fanaticism and professional vanity. He stands out in a season of memorable human villains. Colin Fay copes with Condo, a slave with a more convincing reason for subservience than the archetypal Igor and Renfield characters — he has grown used to slavery since his rescue from the wreck of a Dravidian ship, and Solon has him pathetically caught it an emotional armlock. Only when he realises how attached Morbius has become to his missing arm does he become uncontrollable and have to be "put down" like a rogue animal.

But Madoc has all the best lines, and delivers them superbly, with Condo as a foil for his cynical

> "I am still here. I can see nothing, feel nothing. You have locked me into hell for eternity. If this is all there is, I would rather die now... Trapped like this, like a sponge beneath the sea. Yet even a sponge has more life than I. Can you understand a thousandth of my agony? I, Morbius, who once led the High Council of the Time Lords, reduced to this—to the the condition where I envy a vegetable"

wit: he can hurl abuse at the hapless "chicken-brained biological disaster", but he can also humour himself with Sarah, suggesting that he give Condo her hair as he seems so fond of it. And underneath the suave host performance, Madoc presents the dangerous edge which has kept Solon going over the years despite all the setbacks.

Michael Spice was offered rather less scope than the equally admirable Gabriel Woolf had been in PYRAMIDS OF MARS (serial 4G), for he was a literally disembodied presence in this show. But his vocal presence conveyed the personality of the manic Time Lord, mentally so powerful and yet physically so defenceless and vulnerable. His querelous demands of Solon's attentions sound like an ill relative calling from the patient's sick room, and yet he becomes accusatory and menacing when forcing the surgeon by sheer will to perform the operation with the glass head. In the tense scene where the blinded Sarah stumbles across his hideaway, she cannot tell that he is not entirely present, but neither can the hysterical Morbius tell (despite his mental powers) that she is not one of the Sisterhood, come to destroy him finally and utterly. And when Morbius is at last free of his hellish prison of only one sense (hearing), he is painfully aware that his vile new body is better than nothing.

The irony of being reduced from the noble-browed leader of a fanatical army to a beast fleeing for its life is lost on him. He is a victim of his own impetuosity and vanity, the vices we are led to believe were his previous downfall. Everything has changed about him but for his mind (symbolised by the brain): he is over-hasty in insisting on the operation (even Solon says that he was wrong, when the Doctor's 'corpse' arrives unexpectedly; he is over-confident in taking on the Doctor in the mind battle — the body may be strong, and able to shrug off a cyanide

> "Fascinating... the heat from the flame causes oxidation of the chemicals in the rocks. And then no doubt a chemical reaction with rising superheated gases, and you have your elixir. The impossible dream of a thousand alchemists dripping like tea from an urn"

attack, but the brain case is flawed; and despite the years of waiting, he wastes his opportunity for escape by allowing a tussle with the Doctor to let his worst enemies, the Sisterhood, catch him. All these emotions are conveyed eloquently by Michael Spice's portrayal, a point which no doubt led to his being hired again for the predominantly voiced portrayal of the next season's classic villain Magnus Greel. In the end, when Morbius' mind is no longer his own, the reasoning voice is reduced to frightened bestial cries and the body takes control.

By contrast, the Sisters themselves show little conviction. Too many sects had appeared on the show, even then, for any amount of face-painting and arm-waving to make much of an impression. Cynthia Grenville's Maren might understandably be a tired, quiet performance. But Gilly Brown's wild-eyed Ohica shows little of the wisdom of the ages. And for a race so steeped in suspicious tradition, their conversion to the Doctor's cause is a little implausible. They pull innocent passing spaceships to their doom, but they allow the Doctor to win their hearts and minds with a parlour trick involving fireworks. Their role in the programme's history is fascinating, though. Is it too outlandish to see their influence as responsible for the culture shift in the Time Lords, from strait-laced mechanists in THE WAR GAMES (serial ZZ) to the quasi-mythical, ecclesiastical reading of more recent times?

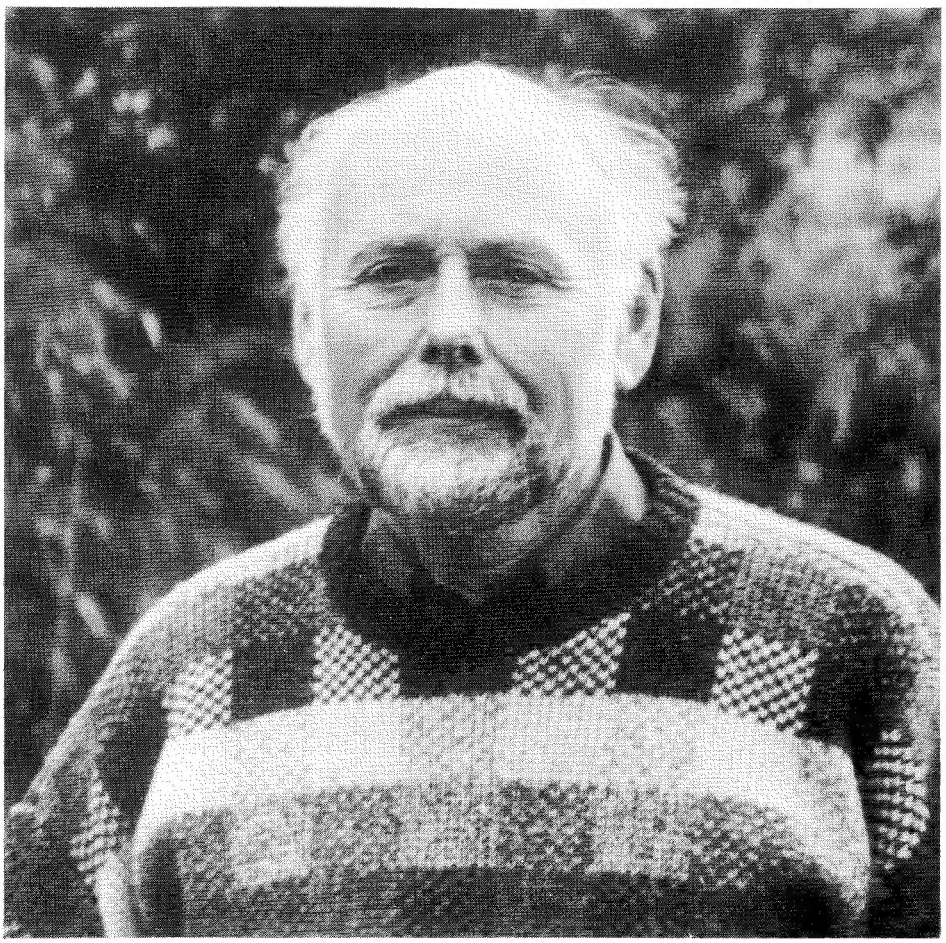
A STUDIO setting foregrounds design, and this story is something of a mix. The planetary landscape of Karn is sub-*Star Trek*, with little sense of scale. Much of the action unfolds around an insubstantial and strangely angular rock stairway. Equally disappointing is the realisation of the Sacred Flame. Even at low ebb, it should have been outwardly impressive. Instead, it resembles nothing so much as a candle inside a formica cupboard, the door covered in aerosol graffiti.

Solon's citadel is much better. The Doctor says it is an old Hydrogen plant, but we know it is The Old Dark House and Castle Dracula done to perfection. Barry Newbery demonstrated that his expertise is not in planetary surfaces, but instead in dusty realism just this side of fantasy.

BRAIN OF MORBIUS is remembered for its performances, and for its contributions to **Doctor Who** continuity. But the most striking memories are the elements from which it was derived, the Frankenstein imagery which pervades the visuals and the narrative. If those who complained about the show had realised this, they'd have acknowledged that what they were objecting to was precisely what made the Hinchliffe/Holmes era of **Doctor Who** so popular.□

Video nasty

CHRISTOPHER BARRY told IN•VISION about violence in MORBIUS and the violence done to it by the BBC



I WAS very pleasantly surprised when I saw the full version of THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS recently. I am still appalled by the commercial version — the way it was cut down by over twenty minutes.

It was done by a BBC producer, and I had heard he was going to do it for the omnibus repeat. I was on the staff of the BBC at the time, and I offered him my services. He said "Thank you very much", as though he were taking it in. But he did not refer to me at all.

It was one of those examples of a producer editing a director's work without reference, which I think is appalling. I have recently been doing a survey of directors about working conditions and malpractices: television directors suffer from them, and this was one of the things which came out of it. Directors can have finished a programme and perhaps gone, and producers edit out things they do not like without reference to the director.

In the case of MORBIUS, it was inexcusable. Not only was I on the staff at the time he was there, but I had started to make notes about what I would have cut. By comparison, I was consulted on the compilation version of THE DÆMONS (serial JJJ): Barry Letts and Terrance Dicks asked me about that, and I think I actually took part in it. I certainly approved of the version that went out. I thought it was better, tighter, and seemed to have everything.

The shortened version of THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS works, but there are strange things missing. It makes sense, except for references in the dialogue to things you have never seen. The characters are suddenly seen carrying lanterns around, yet you do not know that the generator has blown in the storm.

The bit where Sarah is blind and staggering around, almost falling over the cliff, is cut too. That scene establishes the cliff which the Morbius monster eventually falls over himself. There was also a lot of Sarah groping around and coming up — then there's a shot cut, and there is Condo's arm. It's completely wasted in the shortened version, there's hardly any drama at all: suddenly he's there. Whereas in the longer version, he'd have seen her coming and got into position.

For the video version, they could probably have gone back to the original. I think the people that make the videograms for BBC Enterprises knew that there was a short version, and said "Let's bung this on a cassette and sell it". They came to me and asked for my consent — as they had to — for the version that went out. I thought it was probably a foregone conclusion, so I signed and let them have it. Though I was appalled to see the cuts. You never see Sarah looking out across the plain at the crashed, deserted spaceships. So I went to all the trouble of building models, and they leave them out of a version they are selling and which people want to buy.

Another scene that was cut is where Maren talks about how the Doctor will be sacrificed at the stage where the sun comes up. We went to the trouble of having lovely lighting, the sun shining through onto the heel stone as it were. But that was cut — the lovely visual images have gone.

MORBIUS had good lighting effects, including good *lightning* effects and a lot of coloured light too. The lighting of the staircase down to the basement gave a particularly atmospheric feeling of depth, really subterranean. And in that downstairs chamber, a green glow from the tank with the brain. What was as impressive as the atmospheric lighting was the technical achievement of managing that while positioning the actors so that they did not shadow one another. Sound supervisor Tony Millier and lighting supervisor Peter Catlett did a splendid job. I asked Peter Catlett to do the lighting for *Nicholas Nickleby* for me after this.

It was quite a wonder to do in the studio. There was no film, so there was no footage already completed when we went into the studio. As a four-episode show with no filming at all, it was probably made at the lower end of the budget for that year. They are always harder to do in the studio, without having people running down endless tunnels — you are lucky if you don't get a script like that. It had its variation of pace, and its moments of grace and excitement, interspersed with narrative dialogue. Visually, I think it is very exciting, and there is plenty to look at.

THE brain spattering on the floor didn't worry me at all, I think I rather reveled in that. But I understand it worried Mary Whitehouse. I heard that she probably complained that the brain on the ground was a God-given instrument being blasphemously treated. I think there is probably more blasphemy in Solon trying to play God.

But looking at Condo being shot recently, I was shocked by that. At the time I was not. It is rather nasty, almost like Peckinpah. I suppose it was unnecessary, particularly as he does not die right away. Looking back, in the context of being very conscious of violence, it probably was gratuitous. I say that as a sort of personal confession.

It is this old battle whether people are really dead, or whether guns hurt or not. If you see that guns do hurt, then I think possibly it makes an effect. It certainly had that effect on me, watching the Condo scene recently. You don't just point guns and let them happen. They hurt.

But when the Mutt is killed, it is out of vision — just a squeak and a squawk, then you see its head. Mind you, Philip Madoc is later tossing it around like a balloon when it ought to be quite heavy. I suppose that's a lapse in my direction!

Concerning violence though, Philip Hinchcliffe subsequently did a series called *Target*, which was a BBC filmed police series. That was criticised for its violence, and people said that this was not the sort of thing the Beeb ought to do — imitating *The Sweeney*. I wondered whether Philip Hinchcliffe had some sort of scruple with violence or not.

It is an obvious thing to use sexual violence to titillate; then if programmes get talked about and liked by audiences, they get further programmes made. In a sense, it's a self-perpetuating disaster. □

CONTEXT

Martin Proctor

CAST

DR WHO ..... Tom Baker
SARAH JANE SMITH ..... Elisabeth Sladen
KRIZ ..... John Scott Martin
CONDO ..... Colin Fay
SOLON ..... Philip Madoc
OHICA ..... Gilly Brown
MAREN ..... Cynthia Grenville
FIRST SISTER ..... Veronica Ridge
SECOND SISTER ..... Janie Kells
THIRD SISTER ..... Sue Bishop
FOURTH SISTER ..... Gabrielle Mowbray
VOICE OF MORBIUS ..... Michael Spice (2-4)
MONSTER ..... Stuart Fell

Small & non-speaking

SISTERS (1-4)
Alison Daumler, Martine Holland, Tobina Mahon-Brown, Karen Burch, Mary Burleigh
HEADLESS MONSTER ..... Alan Crisp (1-2)
Sarah's Double ..... Jennie Le Fre (4)
MIND BATTLE DOCTORS (4)
Tom Baker, Jon Pertwee, Patrick Troughton, William Hartnell, Philip Hinchcliffe, Robert Holmes, Douglas Camfield, Graeme Harper, Robert Banks Stewart, Christopher Baker, George Gallacio, Christopher Barry

CREW

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT ..... Carol Wiseman
ASSISTANT FLOOR MANAGER ..... Felicity Trew
DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT ..... Pauline Silcock
FLOOR ASSISTANT ..... John Green
LIGHTING ..... Peter Catlett
TECHNICAL MANAGER ..... Norman Brierley
SOUND ..... Tony Millier
GRAMS OPERATOR ..... Gordon Phillipson
VISION MIXER ..... Fred Law
INLAY OPERATOR ..... Dave Chapman
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER ..... J. Allan
MOVEMENT ..... Geraldine Stephenson
SENIOR CAMERAMAN ..... Rodney Taylor (?)
CREW 3
COSTUME DESIGNER ..... L. Rowland Warne
MAKE-UP ARTIST ..... Jean McMillan
MAKE-UP ASSISTANTS
Joan Stribling, Daphne Barker, Maureen Hannaford-Naisbitt, Leri Misselbrook
VISUAL EFFECTS DESIGNER ..... John Horton
DESIGNER ..... Barry Newbery
DESIGN ASSISTANT ..... Les McCallum
INCIDENTAL MUSIC ..... Dudley Simpson
SPECIAL SOUND ..... Dick Mills

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DIRECTOR ..... Christopher Barry

TRANSMISSION

Part 1: 3rd January, 1976, 17.56.00 (25'25")
Part 2: 10th January 1976, 17.47.09 (24'46")
Part 3: 17th January 1976, 17.45.52 (25'07")
Part 4: 24th January 1976, 17.55.13 (24'18")
Repeat: 4th December 1976, 17.51.26 (60'31")

RECORDING

6th, 7th October 1985 (TC1), 20th, 21st October 1975 (TC3), and 24th October 1975 (1'30" scene for part 4 with Solon, Morbius monster, Morbius voice)

FILM

Part 1: 6ft loop (35mm sound, stock rain from Peter Govey, General Screen Enterprises)

MUSIC

Part 1: not available,
Part 2: 11'57"
Part 3: 11'40"
Part 4: 14'20"

VIDEO

Doctor Who — The Brain of Morbius (BBCV 2012, BBCB 2012, 1983)

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PERIODICALS

Plotlines 13
Radio Times: w/e 9.1.76, 16.1.76, 23.1.76, 30.1.76, 10.12.76
Matrix 8 (1981), 'Philip Hinchcliffe Interview' by Ian McLachlan
Shada 9 (1982), 'Terrance Dicks on Brain of Morbius' by Damien Timmer
Skaro IV 2 (1983/4), 'Meanings of Morbius' by Thomas Noonan; 'The Brain of Morbius' by Craig Hinton
TARDIS I 11 (1976), 'Interview: Designer Barry Newbery' by Stephen Payne and Jan Vincent-Rudzki
Starburst 116 (1988), 'Doctor Who: Coffee Beans and Teaspoons' by Christopher Clayden

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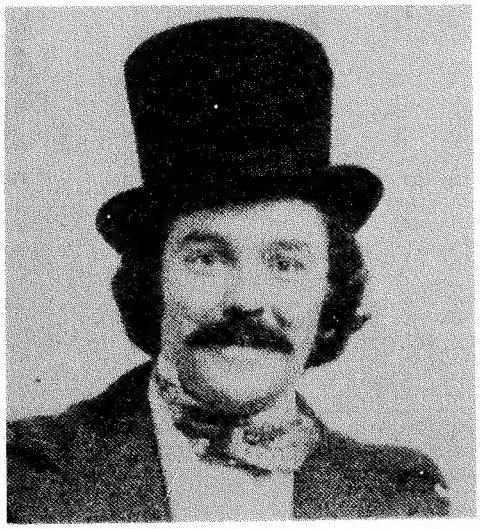

1. Who are the seven production team members pictured?

2. In which order do the Doctors appear in the show?

3. What is the missing 'Young Doctor' now better known for in the DOCTOR WHO world?

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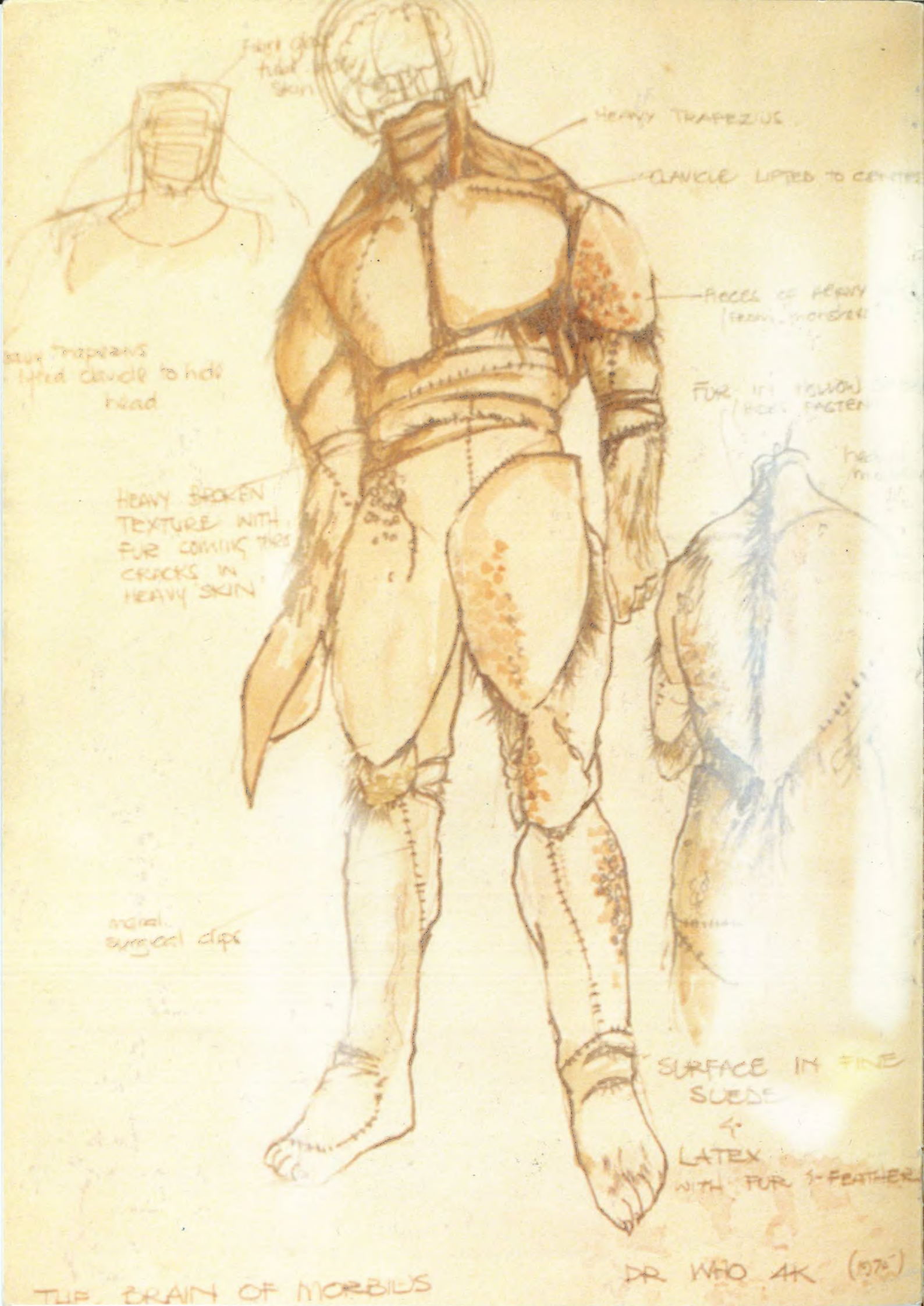

THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS

DR WHO AK (1976)